9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER XIX

SOME CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS. · II.

Shrove Tuesday or " Shraft " was not long ago the great day for weddings in rural Ireland. In older times it seems certain that marriages were celebrated at the seasonal festivals described in Chapter 17. An interesting account of the ceremonies in the barony of Upper Fews, Co. Armagh, was written down in 1818 and has been printed in a pamphlet published by the Dundalgan Press in 1923. It relates how " the courtship of the parties often commences and is carried on at fairs and patrons, and at wakes and funerals, from whence they run away together, that is, the male brings the female, sometimes by force, to one of his friends house." It goes on to describe the negotiations between the two families and the fixing of the bride's portion or dowry. On the wedding day the two parties, consisting of from 20 to 40 relations, contend, on horseback or afoot, " for who will be at the bride's house first ; where, when the parties arrive, the bridegroom and bride are presented with a plate of oatmeal and salt, of which each of them takes three small mouthfulls. After this the parties mount their horses and join in one grand cavalcade to the alehouse and then to the priest. Whichever of the new married couple first rises after the nuptial benediction will, it is considered, live longest."

Following another visit to the alehouse the parties separate and " scamper away towards the bride's house,

[p. 171]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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585 whilst numbers of people are collected on the hills and eminences to behold this race for the bottle. The first person to reach the bride's house is victorious; he is rewarded with a bottle (? of poteen) which is drunk by the company and then broken by the bridegroom. Next "a cake of oatmeal or flour, called the bride's cake, is broken over the bride's head, and is greedily seized upon by young persons present for the purpose of placing a portion of it under their pillow. Another scene of noisy festivity then commences, which often terminates in riot and bloodshed between the different parties."

Fig. 112.

585 532 A wedding custom recorded within the last 50 years from Sligo, Mayo, Galway and Kerry was the wearing of straw masks by "straw-boys" or "soppers," who went about begging money and drink and threatening mischief. The styles of mask varied from one district to another: we illustrate (Fig. 112) the pattern worn in Mayo. It is hardly necessary to add that parallels to this kind of ceremonial dress and mime can be found in many parts of the world. Among the practices connected with childbirth attention has been 846 drawn to survivals of the "couvade," whereby the husband is supposed to share the woman's pains. It is stated that in

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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There are three or four small shops, but only one has a regular counter, and it is also the only public-house on the islands. 444

There is no regular employment for labourers, but occasional work is paid for at the rate of 1*s.* 6*d.* a-day. 465

The women, besides attending to the ordinary domestic duties, help the men at field work, at seed time and harvest, and at drawing sea-weed for manure; they card, dye, and spin the wool for clothing, and in rough weather, when supplies from the mainland are short, grind oats or barley in the quern, either for the cattle or for domestic use. This is extremely hard work, and requires two women, one to work at the grinding, and the other to feed the grain from her apron. They also employ part of their time at quilting or knitting. The average annual money handling of a family is from £40 to £50. 462 [434]

2. *Family Life and Customs.*—The children of a family, who are usually numerous, are sent to school when about four years of age, and at first attend regularly; but as they grow older their attendance is often very irregular, as they are liable to be kept at home by their parents to assist at field work in times of pressure. They are said to be very smart and intelligent, but their progress is interrupted and checked by this cause. At the age of fourteen or fifteen years, when they have reached the second stage of fifth class, they are taken from school, and then enter into the regular routine of household and farm work until they either marry or emigrate. They marry young, generally for purely family reasons, romance not entering into the case. Courtship as a regular institution does not exist; and if exceptional cases occur they must be rare; as for two young people of opposite sexes to be seen walking together is looked upon as being decidedly wrong. Matches are arranged by the parents from considerations of suitability of families, not, as in many other places, by money bargains. As soon as an arrangement is come to between the elders, usually before Shrove, the young man goes and asks the girl personally; if he be refused, which sometimes, though seldom, happens, he considers himself disgraced, and is often inconsolable. The marriages often take place without any rejoicings or social reunions, the young couple going quietly home after the ceremony is over. In some cases they set up house afresh on their own account, but if the bridegroom be the eldest son who usually inherits the parent's house, &c., the bride goes to live with his family. 871 584 585 591

Mr. Michael Lavelle, to whom I am indebted for much valuable information as to the customs and folk-lore of the people, informs me that he has heard that sometimes, on the occasion of a wedding, 585 [115]

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

585 "straw-boys" go round with long straw masks on, and if they do not get either money or liquor will threaten to break the windows and furniture of the house. The women marry very young, from fifteen 582 years upwards; and, if not settled in life by twenty or so, they usually emigrate.

844 Infants are given butter immediately after birth, and are carefully watched, lest they should be "taken away" or changed. For some similar reason a parturient woman has a string tied round the wrist or one of the fingers. All the wood in a house is carefully put outside if 763 the death of one of the inmates is thought to be imminent; and if it should occur the neighbours dread to give wood to make the coffin, as they believe that the person who does so will be the next to die; and if the plank of which the coffin is to be made is not taken down from the loft where it generally is, before the person dies, no inducement can make them use it for the purpose. The people never bury their 764 dead on a Monday, nor on the day of the week in which the Feasts of the Holy Innocents has fallen for that year. They have a great [762] horror of suicides, and believe that if one were to be buried in the graveyard it would cause the other corpses to turn over on their faces.

A wake is held the night before the funeral, on those who have died abroad or been lost at sea, when the news arrives; but owing to [178] the influence brought to bear on the people by the clergy in this matter, it is now only attended by relatives of the deceased, and the character of the ceremony is much altered, most of the old games, the mock marriage, &c., being altogether obsolete, while the insobriety, formerly common, is now a thing of the past. At the funeral the coffin [482] is carried out the back door, and is followed by the mourners. On reaching the graveyard it is carried thrice round the old church in the direction of the sun, and as soon as the grave is reached all those attending the funeral scatter and go to pray at the graves of their own relatives, which, having done, they raise the keen, beginning at the person farthest from the open grave.

The Rev. E. O'Growney, who has generously placed at my disposal a number of notes taken during a visit to these islands, thus describes a funeral he witnessed in Inishbofin:—"The old Irish funeral *caoine* is still used in its full perfection. I happened to be engaged in the church of St. Colman, deciphering a peculiar Latin inscription there, when a large number of people, chiefly women, brought the body of an infant for interment. While the body was being interred the women 764 scattered about the churchyard, each going to the grave of her own 533 friends. Those farthest from the newly-made grave began a low

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

58 not, like an Inishbofin man, consider himself disgraced, nor is he inconsolable.

Engaged couples or newly married people often come in for an amount of attention from the children of the neighbourhood, which, however flattering it may be, is decidedly embarrassing; they are followed about and cheered whenever they appear together. Weddings 585 are occasions of family festivities, and are usually followed by a dance. 533 "Straw-boys" go round to the house on these occasions and take part 292 in the dancing. They are disguised in tall conical-shaped straw masks, adorned with strips of red and green cloth, white shirts decorated with coloured ribbons, and white or red petticoats. The band is headed by a captain and a mate, who enter the house first and declare that they are shipwrecked sailors, and that they have come to dance at the wedding; the captain then dances with the bride, the mate with the bridesmaid, and the rest of the band with the other girls. It is usual to treat the straw-boys to drink, but they often refuse it, and never demand money, or indulge in any rowdy conduct.

591 The young couple usually set up house on their own account, except in the case of the youngest son, who inherits his parents' house and property, in which case the bride goes to live with her people-in-law.

763 When a person is dying, windows and doors are thrown open, and the clock (if there be one) stopped; it is considered unlucky or im-777 proper for any of those in the house to cry until after the death has actually occured.

764 Wakes are still held in this district, and many of the old observances and games are kept up; but owing to the discouragement of these by the clergy, the people show a great reluctance to give any information on the matter. A good deal of drinking usually takes place on these occasions.

The funeral customs have undergone some change during the past thirty years, but much still remains that is worthy of notice. A grave is not usually dug until the coffin reaches the graveyard, if begun before hand it is never dug on a Monday, or commenced at least, but a start is made, if necessity compels, by raising a few sods on Sunday. It is believed to be unlucky to bury a corpse on New Year's Day, an act [777] which is thought to bring misfortune to the whole neighbourhood.

The coffin is usually taken out the back door of the house, and conveyed to the cemetery by the longest route. At the graveyard the *caoine* is raised by the women immediately after the religious ceremony

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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814 [609] is likely to succeed in collecting much. Fortunately there is a resident (the Rev. P. A. O'Reilly), who is engaged in collecting the old Irish songs of the district, several of which he has already published. As to the legends, many of these have been recorded by C. O. and Mr. Knight, to whose works the reader is referred.

The following notes, mainly dealing with what may be termed minor folk-lore, were some of them obtained from fishermen and others of the natives, but mainly through the kindness of several residents, some of whom desired that their names should not be mentioned.

115 814 1. *Customs and Beliefs.*—For the majority of the notes on these I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. J. A. Nolan, of Belmullet, who, being a native of the district, and personally acquainted with nearly everyone in it, has an exceptionally large knowledge of the subject; for a large part of what remains I have also to thank Messrs. F. C. Wallace, D.I. R.I.C., Belmullet, and P. T. O'Reilly, Carn.

777 A very large number of things are considered lucky or the reverse. It is unlucky to dig a grave on a Monday, on which day also no change of residence should be made, a Friday should rather be chosen, as that is the lucky day for moving. To meet a red-haired woman on starting out in the morning, to mention a priest while fishing, to take fish out of a house without sprinkling some salt on it, to sell milk without putting in a pinch of salt, to give fire out of the house on May-day, or to anyone in whose dwelling a sick person may be, all these are unlucky. People "born with teeth" [845] are unlucky also; but to be "born with a caul" is a sign of great good fortune, though should the original owner ever see it his luck will depart; the possession of a caul is believed to protect against death by drowning. A mole on the face, if "above the breath," is considered to have the same protective influence.

787 Death within the year is believed to be the fate of the man who has the temerity to make an addition to the western side of his house, or to build out at the back; several instances of men who died within a short time after thus offending are sure to be told to the incredulous.

The banshee, the death-watch, the creaking of furniture, and the howling of a dog at night are all looked upon as death-warnings. Several persons were met with who asserted that they had heard the banshee before the death of relatives.

● 585 At weddings the bride and bridegroom must step over the threshold of the chapel door together, as whichever goes out first will be the first to die.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

584 not subject to recognized laws of marriage. Romantic unions there must have been, but among the farming population they would have been followed by prolonged arguments and arrangements as to the bride-price. An unusually detailed account of marriage customs in County Armagh in the early nineteenth century is worth quoting at some length:

'The acquaintance and courtship of the parties often commence and are carried on at fairs, patrons and other public places of rural sports and amusements, and at wakes, funerals, etc. from whence they run away together—that is, the male brings the female to one of his friends or relations house. This was heretofore sometimes accomplished by force . . . Shortly after the running away, as it is termed, some of the female's relatives follow her and negotiations commence respecting the match, which often terminate by the female's unhappy father being obliged to promise more portion than his abilities will allow, in order to preserve the reputation of his daughter. The match being agreed upon and the day appointed for the wedding, the intended bride is permitted to return to her father's house, where a scene of preparation commences for the wedding dinner, which generally consists of bruised potatoes and flour . . . and large quantities of oatbread and butter.

585 'On the day appointed for the wedding, the bridegroom's party, from ten to twenty of his relations . . . mount their horses, the women behind the men, except a few of the latter that are single and intend running for the bottle, and advance towards the bride's residence, where they are met by a few single horsemen belonging to the bride's party. When the parties meet, those of them that are single-mounted then contend for who will be at the bride's house first; where, when the parties arrive, the bridegroom and bride are presented . . . with a plate of oatmeal and salt, of which each of them take three small mouthfuls; probably to prevent the power of witchcraft or the effect of an evil eye. After this the parties . . . mount their horses, and the whole then join in one grand cavalcade, the van being led by the bridegroom; the bride riding behind the bridesman, until they reach the ale-house most convenient to where the priest lives. (Here it should be explained that there were few Roman Catholic places of worship

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

at that time and that the ceremony presumably took place in the priest's house.)

'Whichever of the new married couple first rises after the nuptial benediction, will, it is considered, live longest . . .; after this scene is over they again adjourn to the public house . . ., after which the company again mount their horses, the bride being then changed behind the bridegroom's man, and scamper away towards the bride's house, whilst numbers of people are collected on the hills and eminences to behold the race for the bottle. The winning of the bottle is frequently contended for between the bridegroom's and the bride's parties; the first person that arrives at the bride's house is victorious. The victor then receives the bottle and again returns to the main body of the wedding, where he hands it to the bridegroom, who first drinks of it and hands it to his bride, who also partakes, it then goes the round until nearly finished, when . . . the bridegroom flings it with the remaining contents away. On their arrival at the bride's house a cake of oatmeal or flour, which is called the bride's cake is broken over the bride's head, and is greedily seized upon by young people of both sexes for the purpose of placing a portion of it under their pillow, in order that they may dream of their future partners in life. Another scene of noisy festivity and drunkenness then commences, which often terminates in riot and bloodshed between the different parties; there being frequently a kind of rivalry between them in supporting the dignity of the bridegroom and bride, particularly if they do not happen to be of one line of ancestors.'[1]

No doubt where land and livestock were involved such marriages were not so uninhibited as it might appear. Physical attraction was not a prime consideration. The normal course was for a peasant to marry a girl whose capabilities were known or could be fairly judged, preferably 'a far-out friend', who lived close enough for family visits and exchanges of labour to be made. We know from other accounts of marriage customs in the early nineteenth century that the order of events as described above was sometimes reversed: 'The marriage is agreed upon by bargain, and the theft or abduction follows as a concerted

[1] J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews*, 64–66.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

583 [581] matter of form to make valid the marriage.'[1] After the famine, at least, the mutual attraction of the suitors themselves was a secondary consideration. An ill-favoured girl could be made pretty with a dowry of cows or its equivalent in cash, known in the west as 'dry-money'. A marriage between near relatives was not unknown if it meant keeping the name on the land or enlarging the patrimony: 'a blanket is the better of being doubled,' it was said. 'We are all related one way or another' is a comment one hears in isolated mountain districts. In general romantic love was the luxury of the landless, but whatever the motives of marriage there were many charms and omens to be taken into account in winning a person's affections, and some of the magic devices to which a girl might resort are listed in one of Bryan Merryman's poems of the late eighteenth century:

[539]

> Up the chimney stuck the flail
> Slept with a spade without avail,
> Hid my wool in the limekiln late
> And my distaff behind the churchyard gate;
> Flax in the road to halt coach and carriage,
> And haycocks stuffed with heads of cabbage.[2]

582 To this day the marriage or remarriage of old men to young women is regarded as unnatural and wrong, perhaps because it complicates the question of succession. In Co. Wexford, and probably elsewhere, unpopular marriages of this kind are marked by noisy gatherings of young men who serenade the married couple with horn-blowing. A similar custom, the *vito*, is well-known in Andalusia, where it includes the ringing of cow-bells and the singing of scurrilous songs. One of the strangest traditional features of Irish weddings is the visitation of 'straw-boys', that is youths wearing straw masks who attend as uninvited guests and disport themselves at the dance which normally follows a wedding (Fig. 88). I am told that they may still be seen occasionally in Co. Cavan and parts of the west. Formerly the visitors also wore straw suits or white shirts and red petticoats decorated with coloured ribbons. The leader

585 [292]

[1] Wood-Martin, *The Elder Faiths*, 2, 32.
[2] *The Midnight Court*, translated by Frank O'Connor (1945).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

585
[292]

FIG. 88. Straw hats and dress. (1) Strawboys' wedding mask, Co. Mayo. (2) Strawboys' straw suit, Co. Kerry (National Museum, Dublin). (3) Biddyboys' straw hat, Co. Londonderry. (4) Mummers' straw hat, Co. Fermanagh. (5) Estonian straw hat, worn at Christmas games.

of the strawboys claimed the right to dance with the bride, and they were all well entertained. It seems that they would sometimes claim to be shipwrecked sailors, and whatever the origin of the custom it is evident that disguise was an important element in it.[1]

[1]C. R. Browne, *The Mullet.*

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

585 [777] [273] The good luck of the bottle race referred to above may be associated with the 'agreement bottle' of whiskey which was drunk, according to a seventeenth-century account, when the parents and relations of the young couple had reached a marriage agreement.[1] To this day in parts of Co. Down 'running for the broth' is a feature of country marriages, a bowl of broth being the reward given to the person who reaches the bride's house first after the wedding. Until recently, also, the young couple were expected to appear at the Bride's Show on the first Sunday after their marriage: they were accompanied to a special sloping field where they ran hand-in-hand to a stone near the bottom of the field, followed by pairs of linked boys and girls, each boy kissing the stone. Games and what was described to us as 'general carrying on' followed the Bride's Show.[2]

584 In more remote parts of the country match-making is still a recognized procedure. The professional match-maker is a well-known figure, usually a shrewd elderly person well versed in the arts of rural diplomacy, and his role has been fully described by Arensberg. He acts for the farmer who is ready for his son to marry—the son being often well into middle age—by negotiating with the parents of the girl whom the farmer has selected. In the prolonged bargaining as to the amount of the 'fortune' which the girl is to bring with her the values of peasant living stand clearly revealed.[3] Marriage is not so much a personal relationship as a union between groups, reinforcing relations which extend far beyond individuals.

There was a popular belief that the curse of sterility could be placed on the bride by any ill-disposed person who tied knots in a string during the marriage ceremony. A more obvious example of magic was the custom of tying a hen which was about to lay an egg to the bed-post on the marriage night.

[585] There are widespread traditions of the days when landlords exercised the *jus primae noctis* over their tenants' wives, and one hears of leases which contained clauses governing the right.

844 During pregnancy it was lucky to do certain things and to avoid

[1] Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 1, 122.
[2] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, 193
[3] C. M. Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman*, ch. 3.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
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wrote a satire against the rats, and tried it on an infested house at Kilkee, in the same year, but without success.

About the same time certain men in Limerick City were famous for being able to free ships in that port from rats. Their method was to fix a razor, edge upwards, on the ship, and by their charms to force the rats to cut their throats on it.[30]

Dr. G. U. MacNamara tells me that Denis Curtis near Corofin cures liver complaints, bleeding, and cows that have swallowed raw potatoes. He puts his human patients on their backs on his anvil, and pretends to strike them with a sledge hammer. This is done on three occasions, on two Mondays and a Thursday. The patients then drink forge water. All the family have the gift of healing, but only one exercises it. The family legend says that St. Patrick's horse lost a shoe near Kilnaboy, and their ancestor shod it gratuitously. The saint therefore endowed the family with the power, and people even return from America to be cured by the smith.

Marriage tabu.—In eastern Clare, a newly-married woman attended Mass on the Sunday next after her marriage, and was severely criticised for doing so. Local opinion held that she and her husband ought not to attend public worship until the second Sunday after the marriage.[31]

Pucas.[32]—A recent apparition of the *puca* of Clonlara was described to me in 1911 as a dark, shadowy horse near the bridge over the Blackwater, about two miles to the south-west of the village. My nephew, Dr. Hugh Gerald Westropp, heard of similar appearances about 1888.

Lucky and unlucky deeds.[33]—The *geasa* and *buadha*, or tabus and lucky acts, relating to the present County Clare are described in the *Leabhar na g Ceart* (Book of Rights),[34] in a poem by Cuan na

[30] *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. v., ser. iii., p. 362.

[31] I learn from a Petty Sessions case, March, 1911, at Derrygonnelly, that this custom prevails also in Fermanagh, and that friends and relatives do not visit the young couple in the interim, but entertain them on the second Sunday.

[32] Addendum to vol. xxi., p. 481.

[33] Addendum to section xii., *Lucky and Unlucky Deeds*, vol. xxii., pp. 203-4.

[34] Edited by John O'Donovan, 1847, pp. 16-21.

[P.153, B]

551 **192** In *The Aran Islands*[1] Synge makes the following observations on the system of personal names then in use (1898–1902):

> When a child begins to wander about the island, the neighbours speak of it by its Christian name, followed by the Christian name of its father. If this is not enough to identify it, the father's epithet—whether it is a nickname or the name of his own father—is added.
>
> Sometimes when the father's name does not lend itself, the mother's Christian name is adopted as epithet for the children.
>
> Occasionally the surname is employed in its Irish form, but I have not heard them using the 'Mac' prefix when speaking Irish among themselves; perhaps the idea of a surname which it gives is too modern for them, perhaps they do use it at times that I have not noticed.
>
> Sometimes a man is named from the colour of his hair. There is thus a Seaghan Ruadh (Red John), and his children are 'Mourteen Seaghan Ruadh,' etc.
>
> The schoolmaster tells me that when he reads out the roll in the morning the children repeat the local name all together in a whisper after each official name and then the child answers. If he calls, for instance, 'Patrick O'Flaharty,' the children murmer, 'Patch Seaghan Dearg' or some such name, and the boy answers.
>
> If an islander's name alone is enough to distinguish him it is used by itself, and I know one man who is spoken of as Eamonn. There may be other Edmunds on the island, but if so they have probably good nicknames or epithets of their own.

[114 184] While on Tory Island (Oileán Thoraighe), Co. Donegal, in 1962, I collected the names of all living adults and found the system to be basically that reported by Synge for the Aran Islands, with enough distinctiveness to be worth a separate analysis.[2]

601 Kinship terms are rarely used among the islanders except between young children and their parents and parents' 551 siblings. Cousinship is indicated by saying of a person something like 'his mother and my father were the children of two brothers' (*Bhí a mháthair agus m'athair clann na beirte dearbhráthar*), or 'we are children of brother and sister' (*Támuid clann dearbhráthar agus deirbhsheathar*). But in a small community where the genealogical links between persons are common knowledge, such descriptive explanations are rarely called for. Personal names are used 551 instead and in themselves help to indicate a person's position in the kinship structure by showing his line of descent for up to four generations.

A person will in fact have three sets of names: a Gaelic 'ceremonial' set; an English 'practical' set; and a Gaelic-English 'personal' set. A man's full Gaelic name will consist of his baptismal name followed perhaps by his 'epithet' such as Óg (young—usually means youngest of several brothers), Bán (fair), Mór (big), Beag (small—wee), followed by his surname. Such a combination might yield, [585] for example, 'Pádraig Óg Mac Ruadhraigh.' A woman, strictly speaking, retains her family name on marriage and adds the descriptive phrase 'wife of' (literally 'woman of')

* *With two tables*

[P.153, C]

551 and the names of her husband, *e.g.* 'Máire Ní Dhubhghain
[585] bean Shéamuis Mhic Ruadhraigh'—literally, 'Mary, daughter of Doohan, wife of James the son of Rory.' A number of circumstances will determine whether or not her husband's name will 'stick' as a surname or whether she will go on being known by her maiden name. These names in their full forms are only used on ceremonial occasions such as dances—when a man or woman is called upon to sing or step-dance—, or for prayers in church during a serious illness, or for calling the roll in school, or for putting on a tombstone.

551 The practical names are the rough English equivalents
191 of the Gaelic names, used in dealing with English-speakers generally and particularly for use when working in England
167 and Scotland. The Government is usually dealt with in English for several reasons, mainly because although the
464 islanders all speak Gaelic as their native tongue, the language they read and write is English—a situation brought about by the pattern of migrant labouring which forced literacy on them when working in Britain. Also they find 'Dublin' or 'civil service' Irish difficult to follow. Most islanders, then, have an 'English' name. Our examples would be 'Paddy Rogers' and 'Mary Doohan' to the outside world. Sometimes these names stick and are used amongst the islanders rather like nicknames. Usually the English version is a rough phonetic equivalent of the Gaelic—Ó Duibhir becomes Diver, Ó Dubhgain becomes Doogan or Duggan, Mac Fhlaithbheartaigh becomes MacClafferty, etc. Sometimes this is abandoned and an English name taken for its 'likeness' to the Gaelic as with MacRuadhraigh and Rogers—Roger being the English name most like 'Rory.' The name Fíoruisce is sometimes hopefully rendered Whorriskey, but mostly this is not even tried and the simple 'Waters' is substituted. Those going to England for work are particularly inclined to pick an 'English' name, *i.e.* one the foreman will recognize.

551 The third set of names, used for reference, consists of two or more Christian names, either Gaelic or English or both, 'strung' together in the manner described by Synge for Aran. Some people have as many as five or six names and 'epithets' strung together in this fashion. These names are the names of lineal ancestors either on the mother's or the father's side of the family. A person will take as many names as is necessary to distinguish him from all other persons, the surname system being inadequate for this task. (Four surnames cover 80 per cent. of the population.) He does not, however, pick these names arbitrarily but inherits the whole string. He can stop at any point in the string. Thus if a man was called 'Jimmy-Dhonnchadha-Mhuire-Mhicí,' his father must have been 'Donnchadh-Mhuire-Mhicí,' his paternal grandmother 'Máire-Mhicí' or maybe 'Máire-Mhicí-Tom.'[3] Thus if our man wanted to add to his names, he would have to add 'Tom.' Usually one or at most two names are enough to distinguish a person, in

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

able degree, has been dominated by parents who have allowed him to take on few major responsibilities, has a mother who acts as a wife surrogate in all but the sexual sphere (at least consciously), has established a routinized existence, and has male companions for whom he feels affection and with whom he shares numerous work and recreational activities. Some men who have been promised or willed land, and who have consenting parents and brides-to-be, will balk at a match because they are "too happy with the lads," and, if persuaded to marry, they will attempt to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage—"The men run with the boys before marriage and carry on the same afterward." Several bachelors and spinsters almost have married several times in succession, only to find the sexual commitment on each occasion too difficult to make at the last moment.

Before the coming of a permanent priest to Inis Beag, it is asserted that young people contemplating marriage were able to "keep company" frequently and openly before the union was arranged, and that some pairings were "love matches." But since then—with the separation of the sexes from late infancy on, the ubiquity of gossip and opprobrium, and the actions of priests—courting almost has disappeared, and it is not uncommon for a couple awaiting their wedding to have little personal knowledge of one another. Contact on the island between the sexes today is limited to meetings at the few parties which take place, at the occasional summer dances, or *céilí*, held on a large flagging near the school, and sometimes "at the well" or "walking to the cow" during daylight hours. Two generations ago, private Sunday afternoon strolls afforded young men and women the opportunity of coming to know one another well, but these "rambles" about the island are done now only by couples of the same sex—one of the several manifestations of institutionalized friendship. Choice once again seems to be intruding into matchmaking, however, with the increasing demands of acculturated youths for marriage with "love."

Matches are the end product either of secret bargaining between the families involved which can extend for weeks, or of the impetuous act of a man who—goaded by companions or by stout, or both—will visit the home of his "chosen" after dark to negotiate, accompanied by a kinsman or close friend. The bargain, once made, is sealed by the male participants with the emptying of a bottle of whiskey brought by the prospective groom, after which a boy or young man of the household is sent out—often after midnight—to summon relatives and acquaintances for a night long party, known as the *cleamhnas* (the word for matchmaking in Gaelic). Sometimes this party is followed by as many as three more on consecutive nights, the expense for which is borne by the family of the bride-to-be. When the bargaining is protracted, it usually is done during the 12 days of Christmas or the final fortnight of Lent, and the match is announced soon after Epiphany or Easter. Hearsay concerning possible matches abounds at these times, but each year "most rumors are dry," unless, of course, "with a lot of drinking and urging a man might decide to take the plunge." It was customary in the past for the wedding to take place four days after the *cleamhnas*, but now the service must wait from one to three weeks until the genealogies of the families of the bride and groom are examined by the parish priest to determine their degree of consanguinity.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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Numerous factors are weighed by the representatives of the future spouses before a match is consummated. Uppermost in the minds of the relatives of the man is the size of the dowry that the woman will bring to the marriage. In the decade 1951 to 1960, the average dowry was 50 to 60 pounds, but at least one reached 100 pounds. This sum now is used to finance the wedding party, but once it went to provide the passage and "settling in" money for an emigrating sibling, to furnish the dowry for a daughter, or to make life more comfortable for the aging parents. Land and capital (and other status attributes soon to be discussed) possessed by the father or widowed mother of the man are the focal concern of the woman's relatives during matchmaking. Among the factors which enter into the deliberations of both bargaining parties are: the presence in either family line of mental illness or other afflictions which can stigmatize, the economic skills and industriousness of the potential spouses, the number of cognates (relatives on all sides of ego limited only by degree of kinship) which compose the two kin-groups and their propensity to assist and defend (and not to engage in disputes), and the mutual attraction of body and personality of the future spouses. The folk believe that young persons approaching marriage "should have known each other for a long spell" and that "the two should be alike"—as to family position, education, and temperament. It is common for a woman to choose not to marry a man to whom she may be attracted because his mother is overly jealous and domineering, or there are "too many old people in the house."

Most weddings take place on Tuesday during the hour before noon, at the direction of the curate, but at one time they were conducted between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, so that the guests could hurry back to the groom's house "to make a night of it;" the morning ceremony means that festivities commence in mid-afternoon and the party often is "stale by nightfall." Each family invites its circle of relatives and friends who congregate at the respective domiciles in the morning, where the men are served whiskey. The groom's entourage then accompanies him to the house of the bride, and another "round" is proffered them before the procession is formed for the journey to the chapel and back. Three men lead the column at some distance from the bride and groom, to ward off those with the evil eye or any other malignant forces which might threaten the couple. Close behind the bride and groom are the "best man" and "maid of honor," followed in order by the two fathers, male guests in a group, and at the end female guests; the two mothers do not attend the wedding, nor does the bride's mother participate in the matchmaking or allow her daughter to return home until a month following the nuptials (Formerly, she did not enter her daughter's house until a grandchild was born.).

Grooms long have worn mainland attire for the ceremony, but only in 1960 did the first bride do so. Before then, the woman wore a new blue petticoat, accouterments purchased in shops at a nearby mainland port, and a shawl for the first time, draped over the shoulders. Her hair had remained uncut until this day, and she and the groom wore borrowed items of clothing—she usually the shawl and he a coat or tie—to bring luck to their marriage. During the nuptial service, the man not only places a ring on the finger of his bride, but gives her seven shillings with which to buy later a holy picture, or some other object of her

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585 choosing. The kiss of the newly united pair, which in most of the Western world terminates the marriage ceremony, is lacking in Inis Beag, and after leaving the chapel the couple stand for some time in the yard to receive congratulations from guests and others who have attended the wedding, until the procession forms once again to walk to the home of the groom.

[177] Once there, the groom's mother stands on the threshold and places the wedding cake for a moment on the head of her son, to compound the luck already [535] gained by borrowed tie and shawl and donation of shillings. The newlyweds dance together alone before the first dance figure is formed, but they spend most of the night seated side by side, talking to well wishers, while music, song, and dance [431] joyously abound in the adjoining kitchen. Presents are given the couple only by kin who have emigrated and by outsiders who have known the two long and well; [574] the same tradition holds true at Christmas among older children and adults. The wedding party, as the *cleamhnas*, may go on night after night, and so may the third party making up the marriage cycle a month later—the "dragging home," which is celebrated at the bride's former house. The term dragging home is employed when either the vernacular or English are spoken, but the word wedding, and its Irish equivalent *bainis*, are used interchangeably in both tongues. Although the bride must not enter her parents' house for a month after the nuptials, she is free to visit with them elsewhere.

The Family and Kinship

342 There are 79 inhabitable houses in Inis Beag, although many others of
343 hoary vintage still stand and have been converted into outbuildings. Only 71 of
621 these are lived in by the folk, however; 6 of the other 8 (1 of which houses the Dane) recently have been deserted by emigrants, and the remaining 2 are lived in by the curate and the headmaster. The following is a chart showing the categories of personnel occupying the 71 domiciles:

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Number of Households	*Personnel*
30	Husband, wife, and offspring
5	Husband, wife, offspring, and the husband's widowed mother
4	Husband and wife who are childless
4	Husband, wife, offspring, and both parents of the husband
3	Husband, wife, offspring, and the husband's unmarried sister
2	Husband and wife who are childless and both parents of the husband
1	Husband, wife, offspring, and the husband's father who is a widower
1	Husband, wife, offspring, and both parents of the husband and his unmarried sister
1	Husband and wife whose offspring have emigrated
7	Widow and her unmarried offspring
5	Single man (bachelor)
2	Brother and sister both of whom are unmarried
2	Two brothers and a sister all of whom are unmarried
2	Widower and his unmarried offspring
1	Two bachelor brothers
1	Bachelor and his widowed sister-in-law